



Brief Eulogy on the Life
of Gen. John Stark of
Londonderry, N. H.,
given at the Dedication of a
Marker at the Old Home, on
October 25th, 1911, at the Invi-
tation of the Manchester, N. H.
Historical Association.



By REV. JESSE G. MACMURPHY

Reprinted in Book Form, Sept. 3, 1924

Given by
Harriett Chase Nowell

April 13, 1973

MEMORIALS OF MEN.

Monuments and markers, to men of notable abilities and achievements, serve at least two excellent purposes: they serve to show an appreciation of the merits of a distinguished citizen, and at the same time serve to influence and mold the character of the present generation. We of the present day and generation are enjoying the fruits of the labor and travail of certain worthy men; who have gone this way before us, like the man who spent his declining years in this romantic scenery of nature's building. We are trying to recall the memories of other days, the heroic character of our present attention builded his temporary house in this locality, and was familiar with every aspect of this beautiful landscape and river.

We walk upon the ashes of the generations that have trodden these paths before our day; we listen to the sound of the volumes of water forever tumbling over the falls on their way to the sea, the ocean, that is never filled; just as the patriot John

Stark, touched and heard, and received inspirations from the eternal verities of nature and revelation. There is the great mystery of existence, the onward progress toward a destination, the on movement of the waters for thousands of years, with their continuous murmur and story in the rocks, and yet the same river is here today. The progress and development of the man that sees, and hears, and contemplates the mighty creations of the universe, are swiftly carrying him toward the great sea of eternity; thousands daily pass on to that undiscovered country from which no traveler has returned to describe their situation; and yet like the river whose waters pass on to the sea the identity of the human race remains unchanged. The building of character in the abstract seems to be peculiarly problematic, but the present situation is always a development of some feature of the past as the future will be some phase of the present.

The safe and sure principle of action is to build up character with retrospection, to honor worthy companions and patriots for the inspiration and perspective view of the future.

Childhood Years.

The hero of our immediate attention first opened his eyes to the light of day, and the joy of his father and mother, one hundred and eighty-three years ago. There was nothing in his surroundings to afford any conclusion that his career would be different from other sons of pioneer farmers, in a wilderness but recently claimed from the native red men. There is a record of land laid out to his father, in the old town of Londonderry, five years before the birth of this child, which was the next year after the charter of Londonderry was obtained of King George the First of England. The site of the house where John Stark was born has recently been located in the present town of Derry, and marked with a suitable monument by the Daughters of the American Revolution. The charter of Londonderry embraced that territory as well, as portions of other adjoining towns and some of the later home and farm of the parents, Archibald and Eleanor (Nichols) Stark. These worthy parents were blessed with four sons and three daughters. As the strength and energy of the pioneers were spent principally in subduing the savages, cutting down the forests, and bringing the soil into a state of cultivation, it will be realized that little opportunity was found

for education, in the modern sense; where it is systematically administered under competent instructors. But the father of our hero was said to have been a man of education, and a graduate from a university, previous to his coming to America. The rudiments of learning in those days were sometimes obtained by parents combining together, to hire some man of fair ability to teach a few months in the winter season, each family contributing a proportionate amount of board, fuel, lights and other things, to the satisfaction of the teacher. After having lived thirteen or fourteen years on the first site now marked by a monument in Derry the family moved to this part of the province where we are now gathered.

Youthful Training.

The frontier life here appealed to the family more than the settled steady work of the farmer there. In coming to this vicinity at the great falls and fishing pools, the hunting grounds of the red men, this family and a few others, among which was the original proprietor of the land on which we celebrate, they found opportunity to pursue business more congenial to their tastes.

Fishing and hunting and watching by day and by night, against sudden attacks

from the savages, they acquired skill in the use of firearms and acquaintance with the habits of their enemies. Our hero and his brothers made excursions into the wilderness, and hunted and trapped with the skill of the native red man, and often came into conflict with those who resented their intrusion.

It is certain that some qualities of courage and hardihood, exhibited in his excursions among the red men, appealed to their admiration and that he had friends among the savages who found means of shielding him from the extreme penalty of his adventures. Even when captured by them, and carried a long way into the wilderness even into Canadian territory beyond the reach of his companions of the settlement, they appear to have connived at his easy escape, without prejudice of their tribe, by setting him a task which he was abundantly able to accomplish, to the amusement of the sagamores and the discomfort of the young braves. Some of these tales of his excursions are worthy of their being placed among the fictions of Leatherstocking and some have never been published and are only to be found in the reading of old letters in the family.

There were Indians, who were always very friendly to the white man, without losing their native respect and standing;

and so there were white men like John Smith of Virginia who were particularly friendly with the Indians, without in any manner losing sight of their duties to the state, and civilized life and government. And so John Stark became more or less of a scout, and hunter, fitted to join in warfare between organized society and barbarism.

Manhood and Service

We have always lived under laws and protection of these United States, and not infrequently we forget the source of our charter and the protection given to Londonderry and other colonies by the British Army, previous to the breaking out of the American Revolution. It was as patriotic in former years to belong to the red coated army of Great Britain, that patrolled this vicinity, and trooped up and down these valleys, as it is now to belong to the blue coated Grand Army of the Republic, or enlist in the army and navy of the present day; and so it happened, that John Stark in early manhood joined the British Army, as did also his brother William Stark, and so did also Alexander MacMurphy, whose name appears among the earliest records of land holders about these falls. And there were others, whose names are familiar, that held commissions under the British flag; which was our flag at that time.

These men distinguished themselves in the duties of their stations and were promoted. They were exemplary in the discharge of their duties, and were equally patriotic in their devotion to the interests of their countrymen, for the necessities of a revolution had not occurred and no man had thought of calling them Tories or royalists.

Thus after his experience in scouting and hunting, among the Indians, our hero was further fitted for the crowning features of his life by service in the British Army, in which he achieved distinction for bravery, skill and discretion in the defense of the colonies, against their enemies from the north, who employed red men to engage in harrassing the settlers, and attacking the communities. The tales of these various French and Indian wars, attacks, invasions and devastations are interesting reading, and serve to show us how very patriotic men may be, and yet eventually be divided and come face to face against each other under opposite colors, and moved by opposite principles, and brothers may even come to look at each other as enemies to be shot down dishonored and forgotten. It is not good to think of these conditions for it rends the mother's heart to see her sons fighting each other and her household divided.

The Revolutionary Period.

It may well be imagined that the military service of John Stark, with the rangers, and troopers, in various expeditions into the enemy's country, fitted him for the great work of raising and training companies of men to become soldiers to engage in the defence of principles of government, that were not recognized by the mother country. And when the mother country attempted to enforce certain oppressive measures of government; the military companies that had acted as patrols and rangers, and troopers, up and down these valleys, were not disposed to assist in this species of home discipline. The result of this movement to discipline the colony, here as elsewhere, was a failure and there was a speedy determination to eliminate from this country all those persons thought to be tories or royalists, who favored the intentions of the mother country, to try and discipline her colony for resisting an unjust tax on commodities of consumption. The militia, that could be relied upon to stand by their colors, retired to some seaport, and there awaited support from outside; while the soldiers, that favored the resistance to these exactions, became active in forming new companies of patriots, to save

themselves and their families from the threatened discipline, that soon would follow the breach of order. This was a period of extreme pain and suffering to many households, for the step toward freedom and independence was the parting of many good and honest hearts, whose friendships had never before been broken.

Now it may be possible to think, the war of the revolution would have turned out differently, if John Stark had remained with the brother in the service of the mother country, instead of espousing the cause of the revolutionists. The importance of the service, which Gen. John Stark rendered to this country, in taking that position, can never be over estimated.

Industry and Reward.

There is no necessity for going into the recital of achievements of Gen. John Stark, in the wars of the revolution, which extended over a period of about seven years, for particular accounts of all these engagements, in which more and more he became distinguished as a brave soldier and leader, are to be found and read in the public histories of our country, in the archives of our National Congress, our state libraries, in the numerous published histories of our towns, not to mention biographical sketches that have appeared at various times. He

was a great leader and fighter in the achievements of American Independence, but this is not all that can be said of the man. In all these years of hunting, trapping, scouting and ranging, serving in the British Army, and his great service to the American people, in which he was promoted in command to captain, lieutenant, colonel and general, it did not prevent him from accomplishing an enviable reputation in other lines. As a man of energy and prudence he accumulated and retained a large amount of real estate, operated saw-mills, and engaged in developing the resources of the lands and waterpowers he occupied.

In his happy marriage, notwithstanding his strenuous life, that called him away on many missions, he raised a large family of children. Neither was it thought to be burdensome, foolish or inexpedient, to assume the responsibility of bringing eleven children into the world. They made him to feel as the young giant refreshed with sleep or new wine, he was not ashamed "to speak with his enemies in the gate" or in the language of the scriptures his quiver was full of arrows. We erect monuments to men in token of our appreciation of certain valuable qualities they possessed, as men, as citizens, as patriots, as fathers of

our country; and we do it, that the present generation may think of the rock from whence they were hewn, and meditate upon the achievements of these men under peculiar difficulties.

Peaceful Old Age.

When the war of 1812 came Gen. John Stark was eighty-four years of age, and unable to participate in the strife, but he watched the progress of the contest with unabated interest. The success of American arms was no longer a matter of uncertainty and doubt, and the hero of a hundred engagements rested at his farm in the enjoyment of a quiet old age.

When we contemplate the occupation of this man, in his home here, in this picturesque scene, after the achievement of power, honor, family and wealth; we come to realize the hand of a superior providence, that amply rewards the deeds of the worthy and exemplary. In the home of his own building, in the midst of his family, surrounded with books and things of vertu, he cultivated the domestic ornaments of a well spent life and a well grounded hope. The barn yard fowls were a source of pleasure and each and every little peculiarity of feather and figure appealed to his attention. They came at his call and seemed to be happy in his presence. The horse and the dog, and

every domestic animal received some mark of his attention.

We have spoken of his books, for in his later years he found great comfort in reading history, romance and poetry, more especially works of the Scottish writers. And while we are placing one more monument or marker to the honor of this man whose virtues cannot be numbered, nor his influence upon the destinies of this country measured; let us remember to mark one other trait of character. This man lived into his ninety-fourth year, and enjoyed full possession of his mental faculties to the last, and during these declining years found daily comfort in reading the holy scriptures. Daily as this distinguished citizen, patriot, soldier and officer of the highest rank drew nearer to the end of his long, busy life, his mind rested on the great change that must come to every human being. And in that divine book, which is the inestimable gift of God to man, Gen. John Stark found consolation and comfort, a reason for the hope which was in him of the immortality that lies beyond the grave. While doing honor to his memory, let us not forget the all important consideration of his Christian faith, and efficiently memorialize this peculiar virtue to all succeeding generations.

